



THE HACKNEY SOCIETY

A charitable company limited by guarantee.

Company registration no. 4574188

Charity no. 1126736

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2018



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Charity information

The Hackney Society is a civic and amenity society.

Board of Trustees:

Ray Blackburn
Monica Blake
Laurie Elks
Tony Gillett
Julia Lafferty
Nick Perry - from 27 June 2017
Lisa Shell
Margaret Willes - until 14 November 2017

Officers:

Chair: Lisa Shell - until 27 June 2017
Nick Perry - from 27 June 2017
Vice Chair: Margaret Willes - until 27 June 2017
Lisa Shell - from 27 June 2017
Treasurer: Tony Gillett

Registered office: The Round Chapel
1d Glenarm Road
London E5 0LY

Bankers:

The Co-operative Bank p.l.c.
P.O. Box 250
Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

Independent Examiner:

David Harris FCMA
36 Malvern Road
London E8 3LP



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ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2018. The company's charitable objects are as follows:

- 1. To promote the highest standards in design and protect Hackney's unique heritage.**
- 2. To encourage positive development of the borough's built and natural environments, through engagement with a broad cross-section of local people and experts.**
- 3. To encourage exemplary new design, regeneration and conservation of our rich heritage.**

The Hackney Society is a membership organisation, a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee. An elected Board of Trustees, drawn from the membership, manages the work of the Society.

What do we do?

- Organise public events including talks, guided walks, exhibitions and site visits (aimed at members, non-members and new audiences)
- Produce publications which celebrate Hackney's social, cultural and architectural history
- Produce a regular newsletter 'Spaces' to highlight the society's work and important current issues
- Campaign to protect local buildings of historical and/or architectural merit
- Co-ordinate a Planning Group to assess important developments and emerging policy on the built environment
- Promote high standards of design, construction and conservation, including through making comments on selected planning applications in the borough
- Support the six Conservation Areas Advisory Committees (CAAC) made up of local people including publication of their minutes on our website, where required
- Build links between residents, officials and councillors, including being a member of Sustainable Hackney
- Provide advice and support to local groups to help them improve their neighbourhoods



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Review of activities during year ended 31 March 2018

Introduction

The Society has highlighted the limited funding we receive in a succession of recent annual reports. 2017/18 has seen no improvement in this respect. Yet the Society continued to deliver a modest programme of projects and events whilst maintaining its public profile and its level of engagement with the planning authority on matters of development, and develop future projects.

Crucially, the Society continues to meet its charitable objectives.

1. Membership

Membership is stable at 236 members of whom 68 are life members, and as a body provides the largest single source of income, albeit generating little to no surplus for general projects. In the wake of our change of bankers reported in our last Annual Report, there has continued to be an encouraging take-up of non-Standing Order renewals, but there remain around thirty members who in spite of attempts to contact them, have not updated from their old Standing Orders and so are no longer members. We continue efforts to establish if those people wish to rejoin.

2. Fundraising and volunteering

The necessary work to continue the activities of The Hackney Society either has been undertaken by volunteers, or, where appropriate and funding has been obtained, outsourced. Work such as organising events, editing the newsletter, book sales, managing the membership and dealing with planning matters continues to be done solely by volunteers including, and especially, the Trustees.

3. Special Projects

Hackney: portrait of a community 1967-2017

The Society has published a new book to celebrate its 50th anniversary, which was in 2017. The production team commissioned over 50 authors, photographers, and sub-editors for the project. The Trustees are immensely grateful to those involved in production of the book, especially Laurie Elks, Margaret Willes and Glory Hall. The launch was marked by a well-attended special event for contributors, friends and the press held as the guests of Hackney Council in the newly refurbished Town Hall atrium on 4 October 2017. A public discussion event, open to all was held shortly after in the Old School Rooms of the Round Chapel.

The book has been well received and reviewed in the local press with *The Hackney Gazette*, in particular, utilising considerable material from the event and the book.

The book, because of its size and scope, has proved expensive to produce and the initial print run had to be limited to 1000 sale copies, to keep within the cash constraints of the Society. Initial sales were healthy and as at 31 March 2018, just over 600 copies have been sold through local bookshops, events, and direct website sales.



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4. Programme of events

Events have been well-attended and popular.

We ran **nine events** during this financial year.

There were **four** walks: *Lee Valley sponsored walk*, led by Laurie Elks; *A Victorian Walk Through Dalston*, led by Sarah Freeman and Laurie Elks; *The Far Corner*, led by Ray Rogers; *Dynamic Dalston*, led by Lisa Shell and Ray Blackburn.

There were **two** building tours: Passivhaus, led by Bernard Tulkens; Holborn Studios led by Vincent McCartney, followed by the AGM.

There was **one** talk, in partnership with Friends of Hackney Archives and held at Hackney Archives, *Clapton Tales* given by Carolyn Clark; **one** panel discussion held at The Round Chapel, *The Hackney Society at 50*; and **one** social evening at St. Augustine's Tower.

The Trustees would like to thank the various venues and the walk and talk leaders for supporting our events programme through volunteering to participate in these events. Their energy and commitment is greatly appreciated and to be recognised.

5. Publications

1. As outlined in section 3, a book to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Hackney Society in 2017 was published in October 2017. *Hackney: portrait of a community 1967-2017* looks at each of the 50 years and uses the date to consider different topics to trace not only the history of the Society, but also of the borough. Trustees are grateful to the very many contributors to this project.

2. The Society continues to sell its backlist titles through local bookshops, and occasionally at local events and fairs. Towards the end of the financial year, The Society began selling its titles through the Amazon Marketplace. It is our policy to price Amazon sales so they are no cheaper than RRP and that our income, net of postage and package costs, is greater or similar to those of direct website sales and trade sales.

3. Work that began in 2014 on a new version of *Hackney Houses*, a guide to improvement, conservation and maintenance of late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses remains on hold, with a view to reviewing the project in the next financial year.

4. At the 2017 AGM, members agreed, on the advice of the Trustees and their independent financial examiner, to write down £2000 of the held stock of the most recent book titles – which were then, unrealistically, valued at over £8000. This reduction in value helps to stop the value of Society's stock seeming artificially high. It is likely we will seek further write-downs in the future in order that the stock value is fully depreciated by the time sales have all but stopped.

6. Spaces newsletter



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The Society produced **four** issues of *Spaces*: 57, 58, 59 and 60.

The newsletter is quarterly and is written by voluntary contributors. They cover planning and historic building issues in the borough, topical issues, forthcoming events, buildings at risk and updates on Hackney Society projects and events. Buildings and issues covered by *Spaces* over the year included: 55A Kyverdale Road, Swifts, A Hackney Autobiography, Heart of Hackney, Grange Hall, Wither Shoreditch, Vex, Holborn Studios, Lower Clapton, Woodberry Wetlands, Artists in the City: Celebrating 50 Years of SPACE and 'Small Sites' – New Policies. To celebrate and publicise the new book, *Spaces* introduced a new column presenting a photo from the book. Selected by Laurie Elks, the photos in issues 58, 59 and 60 were by Berris Conolly, Alan Denney and Monica Blake.

The newsletter continues to be funded piecemeal and by in-kind contribution of the editor and Trustee, Monica Blake, along with Ray Blackburn and Claudia Jessop for help with copyediting. The Trustees and Director would like to thank Helene Binet, Carolyn Clark, Gideon Corby, Jane Eggington, Laurie Elks, Wendy Forrest, Joanna Layla, Ioana Marinescu, Nissen Richards Studio, Jim Richards, Rosa Schling, SPACE Studios and Kirsty Styles for their **articles** and **photographs**. We would also like to thank Glory Hall. Without her generosity, we would not be able to afford the commercial rates for **design**.

7. Websites

The Society continues to maintain our main website <http://hackneysociety.org> and in lieu of grant funding to redevelop the site entirely, continues with minor reorganisation of pages in the hope that the most relevant materials are easier to find.

Two other *micro-sites* are still available but not actively updated.

hackneybuildings.org (aka lovelocallandmarks.org)
hackneysociety.org/health

The Trustees thank *Community Sites* for their continued provision of services at very modest costs for community and amenity groups such as ours.

It has been the Trustees' aim to prioritise redevelopment of the website but we remain constrained by the lack of capital funds for the project, which we estimate would need between £2000–£3000.

8. Social Media

Social media continues to be important and we are indebted to Rossana Tich who continues to manage our Twitter presence, despite stepping down as a Trustee. As at 31 March 2018 we had around 10,300 Twitter (@HackneySociety) followers, up by 800 on the same time last year.

Our Facebook (@theHackneySociety) page is less actively managed and generally automatically reflects our Twitter activity.

9. The Hackney Society Planning Group (HSPG)



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The Planning Group meets on a monthly basis to review proposals for significant developments within the Borough. Group members submit comments to the Council in response to planning applications, as well as provide advice to developers, their design teams and other interested parties ahead of their submissions for planning approval. The Hackney Society is not a statutory consultee. However, in the light of the Council's encouragement of early consultation, the Planning Group continues to be approached directly by developers, who make regular presentations to the group ahead of their submissions for planning approval, including the following over the last financial year:

- 48 Eagle Wharf Road – Sturt's Lock by Studio Egret West
- 21 Lavender Grove by 6a Architects
- Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street by AHMM
- Shoreditch Island Site by Douglas and King Architects
- 2-4 Orsman Road by Nissan Ricards
- 46 Clarence Mews by Nissan Richards

The group has engaged periodically with the Council's ongoing programme of spatial planning and policy consultations, though limited resources in terms of volunteer time make this a difficult task to perform diligently.

The group raises questions and concerns but also attempts to provide support to those bringing positive visions and quality of design to the borough.

The group recognises a shared interest with the borough's six CAACs (Conservation Areas Advisory Committees), who comment on applications within conservation areas, and continue to share information, and invite CAACs to relevant presentations, meetings and discussions. Whilst comments from the Planning Group have not been uploaded to the Hackney Society website over the last couple of years, three of the CAACs, have provided their comments for upload, which we hope, provides a useful resource. Publication of the HSPG comments is complicated by the ad-hoc way in which they are made to the Council – which introduces an additional effort to publish them on the outdated Hackney Society Website.

The Council have not resumed their coordinated meeting for all six of the CAACs in over two years, but have continued hosting occasional Planning User Forums. The Council's IT systems continue to be beset with various problems affecting access to planning documents, which has continued to impact the work of the CAACs and HSPG. We do benefit from regular contact with the relevant departments, both raising the seriousness of the problems and offering support. Nick Perry continues to develop some planning application monitoring and access software for the Group, which makes their work more efficient and effective and can mitigate some of the shortcomings of the Council's services.

The members have not made any further efforts to provide formal design and conservation advice to Hackney, such as contribution to the borough's Design Review Panel or in recovering a formal role during planning committee meetings. Nevertheless, the Society's Chair, Nick Perry, continues to attend most of the Council's Planning Sub-committee meetings as an observer, sometimes making public address, and usually reporting on developments live via Twitter.



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Lisa Shell retains the chair of the group, with administrative support from Nick Perry, and a consistent contribution from the following volunteers throughout the financial year: Claire Warnock, Trevor Horne, Robin Mallilieu, Dickon Hayward, Ken Rorrison, Bernard Tulkens, Alfie Stroud, Luke Dewey and new member, Michael Nelles. Other attendees have included: Rob Briggs, Jerry Cooper and Jamie Wallace. Unfortunately, Claire Warnock has relocated to New Zealand, but we hope to entice her back to the group when she returns to Hackney.

The planning group email discussion list comprises over 40 members, including the chairs of the CAACs, who receive monthly minutes and are updated of meetings, presentations and planning issues of interest.

10. Partnerships

The Hackney Society works with other organisations in Hackney. In particular, it is represented on the committee of Friends of Hackney Archives. The Society entered the third year of a reciprocal membership exchange with Sustainable Hackney.

11. Plans for 2018/19

With no immediate prospect of grant funding, and a continued lack of specialist trustee skills in this area, our plans for the next year continue to be modest and focused on what volunteers can offer. We continue to seek to expand on those skills and apply for funding where appropriate and the return on the investment of time is sufficient.

We continue to have eyes on a revamp of our websites but these are likely to require around £3000 of capital funds. The publications group is keen to re-examine the 'Hackney Houses' title, but is mindful of the need to replenish the publications fund which, as anticipated, was raised and entirely depleted on publication of *Hackney: portrait of a community 1967-2017*. Whilst sales have restored it somewhat, it is likely the current funds available are insufficient for both a reprint and a new project.

The standard membership fee of £15 has remained constant for a number of years and is modest considering the benefits may derive from it. Membership fees no longer provide the Society with any material surplus once the production expenses for *Spaces* are deducted. Whilst we currently offer free places on most walks and talks to members, we cannot continue to offer large discounts on our publications. We continue to explore new membership models in light of our running costs and with ambitions of future projects in mind, whilst simultaneously ensuring engagement is high amongst the people of the borough. Nonetheless we continue to be grateful for all membership contributions and donations of all sizes which allow us to continue to do what we do on a tight budget.